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The Chinese Communist Party's Sixth Plenum: Deng Firms His Grip

A Research Paper

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A Research Paper

*Information available as of 15 August 1981
has been used in the preparation of this report.*

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
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Key Judgments

Deng Xiaoping's attempt to ensure political stability and the continuation of his reformist policies after he dies made a major advance in June at the Sixth Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party's 11th Central Committee, when Deng and his followers strengthened their grip on party power. As a central element in this effort, Hua Guofeng was replaced as party Chairman by Deng's longtime protege, Hu Yaobang.

The plenum produced a "Resolution" on party history that criticizes Mao Zedong and ideologically supports the pragmatic approach Deng and his allies have taken in revamping the party line. To obtain the party's endorsement of the Resolution, Deng steered a middle course between the demands of uncritical Mao loyalists and the extreme condemnations urged by some in Deng's wing of the party. The result amounts to a document that will remain open to interpretation.

The victory of Deng and his reform group was delayed six months by economic and social problems that emerged late last year. These troubles provoked a strong political reaction that emboldened critics of Deng's plans. Through a delicate combination of compromise, careful timing, and political craftiness, however, Deng succeeded in placating his formidable opponents with comparatively minor gestures while scoring lasting gains.

The most visible price of Deng's success was acceptance of the arguments of those, particularly in the military, who were alarmed over the unforeseen consequences of the party's drift toward pragmatism. Deng yielded to hardline sentiment on questions of social order and the need for "spiritual" exhortation as well as "material" incentives to motivate the populace.

In order to deal with disgruntled elements in the military, Deng was also forced to take over chairmanship of the party's Military Commission only a year after voluntarily giving up his position as chief of staff. Before the plenum, Deng successfully pressed the Army to accept his choice for Minister of Defense and the second budget cut in less than a year, but he could not arrange for Hu Yaobang to succeed Hua Guofeng as Chairman of the Military Commission.

Moreover, the difficulties encountered in building a consensus for the plenum led to delays and confusion in implementing the reforms Deng's supporters had launched with great fanfare last fall. Mixed signals adversely affected economic performance as lower level officials waited for the leadership to sort out its priorities.

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In foreign affairs, the plenum reaffirmed China's anti-Soviet foreign policy. It also approved a new, more nationalistic line that demonstrated particular sensitivity over the Taiwan issue.

Deng and his allies are in a race against time to demonstrate the success of their reforms. They still face resistance in the party and Army from numerous officeholders who gained their positions during Mao's Cultural Revolution. Hu, moreover, is personally unpopular among segments of the Army and populace. Despite the gains made at the plenum, this opposition could still provoke a confrontation that might frustrate achievement of Deng's goals.

Before the 12th Party Congress next year, Deng and his allies will seek to consolidate their gains further, although with a caution nurtured in the six months of delicate politicking that led to the Sixth Plenum.

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The Chinese Communist Party's Sixth Plenum: Deng Firms His Grip

Introduction

The Sixth Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party's 11th Central Committee, held 27-29 June, has further strengthened Deng Xiaoping and his reformist allies in their continuing struggle with well-entrenched leftist and orthodox elements in the party and military. Deng's approach to the plenum was marked by a combination of compromise, careful timing, and political craftiness—tactics that enabled him to score important gains in key appointments and ideology while placating his formidable opponents with comparatively less significant concessions.

After an enlarged Politburo meeting in May and an expanded work conference of the Central Committee in mid-June, the Sixth Plenum "unanimously" endorsed:

- Promotion of Deng's longtime protege Hu Yaobang to the party chairmanship.
- Demotion in disgrace of former Chairman Hua Guofeng to the most junior vice chairmanship.
- Appointment of Deng Xiaoping as Chairman of the party's Military Commission.
- Promotion of Premier Zhao Ziyang to fourth-ranking position on the Politburo Standing Committee.
- "The Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," a document that both praised and criticized Mao Zedong.
- Appointment of Deng-loyalist Xi Zhongxun to party secretary in charge of legal affairs.

The Campaign Against Hua

The changes in personnel announced at the Sixth Plenum cap the five-year effort by Deng and his supporters to remold the party's top leadership. Ousting Hua Guofeng from the three important posts he obtained just before and after Mao Zedong's death remained Deng's key objective all along; by removing Hua as Premier, Chairman of the party Central Committee, and Chairman of the party Military Commission, Deng has positioned his followers to prepare an eventual succession to Deng's authority in order to ensure the continuity of his policies.

Deng has used "salami tactics" to achieve his ends against tremendous odds. At the watershed Third Plenum in December 1978, he arranged to have the party declare an end to the period of large-scale "class struggle," thus effectively rewriting the ideology underpinning the position of Hua Guofeng and other beneficiaries of the Cultural Revolution. At the same time, Deng succeeded in adding four members to the Politburo, including the independent-minded veteran leader and Vice Chairman Chen Yun, who has proved a major Deng ally at crucial moments, and Hu Yaobang, who assumed the powerful positions of party secretary general and director of the Propaganda Department.

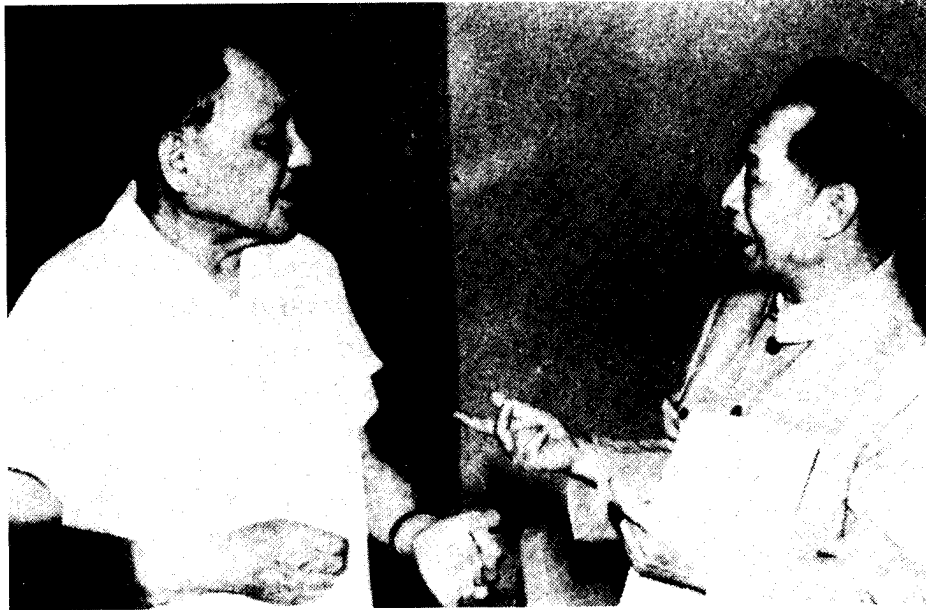
Deng again advanced the positions of his followers at the Fourth and Fifth Plenums in 1979 and 1980. In 1980, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang moved onto the Politburo Standing Committee, the most powerful body in the party. The reformers weakened Hua's position by removing from the Politburo four left-leaning beneficiaries of the Cultural Revolution. The party's reestablishment of the party Secretariat, destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and the selection of General Secretary Hu Yaobang as its head also sharply limited Hua's role in the party's day-to-day work.

Hua's slide accelerated in September 1980 when the Third Session of the Fifth National People's Congress approved Zhao Ziyang as Premier in place of Hua. Three months later the Politburo—after meeting for nine sessions—decided to remove Hua from the chairmanships of the party and its Military Commission. In his stead, Hu Yaobang was chosen to be party chairman.

By late December 1980, it appeared that Deng had effectively cut Hua out of the leadership.

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Deng Xiaoping, China's dominant political figure, and his heir apparent, new party Chairman Hu Yaobang at the Sixth Plenum [redacted]



People's Daily ©

[redacted] A central work conference was set for late December, and its agenda was widely expected to deal with Hua, as well as to approve a critical assessment of Mao Zedong intended to shed the party of his radical ideological legacy. [redacted]

The December Work Conference—A Very Cold Wind
By the standard that Deng prizes most—the placement of his people in key jobs—the December work conference of the Central Committee was a qualified success, but his moves provoked a strong reaction that was reinforced by broader problems in the economy and society. Deng's game plan for the work conference went awry when the meeting unexpectedly focused on the economy. Essentially, Deng's opponents sensed his weakness on economic and social issues.

[redacted]
Deng's earlier moves against Hua had already made the political climate surrounding the conference tense. The stakes were high; Cultural Revolution holdovers believed that Deng's seizure of the levers of control would ultimately lead to their political eclipse. Just as important, orthodox party leaders who were alarmed by the disarray in Poland because of the experiment with reform were inclined to slow the pace of change to avoid similar disorders. Finally, the trial of the Gang of Four—then under way—had sharpened differences within the party over the legacy of Mao, whose name was dragged into the courtroom defense by his widow Jiang Qing despite the regime's elaborate measures to prevent that occurrence. [redacted]

[redacted]
On the face of it, the decision to stress economic readjustment in December was a setback for Deng, who had launched his ambitious reform program only a few months earlier. Even so, Deng and the reformers, who won the support of Chen Yun on economic questions, were able to cushion their acceptance of some responsibility for exacerbating the economy's

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difficulties by blaming China's longtime economic planners for the fundamental problems of the economy. Indeed, Deng and his group took the offensive against their critics by charging them with "left deviationism." Party Vice Chairman Li Xiannian and the "petroleum faction," so called because of its grip on China's troubled petroleum industry, were particularly vulnerable on this score—a weakness evident after the work conference in Deng's ability to trim, albeit not eliminate, their power. [REDACTED]

In spite of the strong political shudder sent through China by the work conference, Deng came out ahead.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Hua had been relieved of all but the ceremonial responsibilities of the party chairmanship. Hu Yaobang was to assume his duties until the Sixth Plenum formalized the change; Deng Xiaoping took over the Military Commission's work. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The price of Deng's success was acceptance of some of the arguments of those, particularly in the military, who were alarmed over unforeseen consequences of the party's drift toward pragmatism. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The results of the conference, moreover, affected Deng's policy goals directly by endorsing the stringent cutbacks in investment and delays in implementing economic reforms that had been mandated earlier by the Politburo. [REDACTED]

China's economic circumstances clearly added weight to the political pressures on Deng and the reformers to go along with the orthodox policies of the central work conference. Given the disastrous political impact of inflation on the previous Chinese regime, news that inflation rates ran 10-15 percent late last year shocked the party leadership into endorsing drastic cuts in state expenditures. The cuts carried political consequences for Deng's economic reform program, since they included the newly established bonuses that were an integral though frequently mishandled part of the policy of "material incentives." The effect of

reducing spending on capital construction and closing inefficient factories also promised to add to the regime's already serious unemployment problem—a prospect that entailed the need to consider new measures to maintain social order. [REDACTED]

The turnabouts in reform policy and in the top party leadership evoked strong reactions. Liberal elements in the Chinese political spectrum felt sold out because of the reduced emphasis on reform of party, state, and economic structures and the inroads into material incentives by hoary appeals for self-sacrifice. Left-leaning and orthodox opinion objected to the bum's rush treatment of Hua Guofeng, particularly in the face of the credit accorded him in helping to oust the Gang of Four in 1976. These groups also sensed that they could exploit an apparently fragile leadership consensus to roll back even more of Deng's pragmatic initiatives since the Third Plenum, including criticism of Mao, cadre rectification, and the dismantling of the commune system. [REDACTED]

Trouble With Hua Guofeng

The Sixth Plenum eventually confirmed Hua Guofeng's fall from grace, but only after more than six months of wrangling. Crosscurrents in the Chinese media about Hua's removal as the party Chairman during the December work conference suggest that Deng was compelled to push hard against resistance from Hua's supporters. The specific circumstances behind Deng's trouble with Hua remain unclear, but it appears that Hua changed his mind in December and decided not to cooperate in his own ouster. According to the Hong Kong leftist press, Hua openly displayed his unhappiness through his refusal to attend public ceremonies intended to demonstrate leadership "unity." In the Chinese political culture a withdrawal of this sort amounts to a call for political support. The specific rationale behind Hua's move is unknown, although it seems likely that he wanted to use his remaining leverage to bargain for power and status in his reduced role as a vice chairman. [REDACTED]

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China's five most active top leaders chatting informally during the plenum.



Pictured are Chen Yun, Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Li Xiannian, and Zhao Ziyang. This picture seems intended to convey a collegial atmosphere in the Politburo's standing committee. Missing are ailing Ye Jianying and recently demoted Hua Guofeng.

Wide World ©

Hua drew his support from three sources: number-two ranking leader Ye Jianying, elements in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and lower level cadres who profited from the Cultural Revolution. As Mao's ostensible heir, Hua was the rallying point for those threatened by Deng and his policies. Public appearances by Hua in his capacity as chairman on two occasions during 1981 seemed to signal an understanding with his enemies over his fate, and there were anomalies in the media that suggested he would be demoted. Some stories recounted wrangling over the ranking Hua would receive as vice chairman even as late as the preplenum work conference in June [redacted]

While some in Deng's group may have tried to force Hua all the way out of the party's senior ranks, at no point did Deng appear to seek Hua's complete ouster from the top leadership. Whatever Hua hoped to obtain from his maneuvering, in the end he lost big. The original agreement to reduce him to vice chairman held, and he reportedly retains no real power as number seven—the last—on the Politburo Standing Committee. Moreover, the Sixth Plenum's Resolution, which was used by Deng's forces to place Hua's past errors on record with those of Mao himself, has left Hua with only a veneer of respectability. The

plenum asserted that notwithstanding his contribution to the arrest of the Gang of Four—a principal point offered by Hua's supporters—Hua had:

- Promoted the erroneous "two whatevers," a codephrase for uncritically upholding whatever Mao said or did.
- Tried to suppress discussion of the "criterion of truth," Deng's main ideological theme.
- Obstructed the rehabilitation of veteran cadres and the reversal of previous political errors, including treatment of the Tiananmen incident in 1976 that toppled Deng.
- Shared responsibility for an overambitious economic policy in 1976-78. [redacted]

The Resolution concluded: "Obviously under his leadership it is impossible to correct left errors within the party, and all the more impossible to restore the party's fine traditions." Permitted to decide for himself whether to make a self-criticism, Hua reluctantly made a brief statement that fell short of a full self-criticism during the preplenum work conference. [redacted]

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Ye Jianying, who was unable to attend the entire plenum session, is pictured seated, receiving Politburo members Deng Yingchao, the widow of Zhou Enlai, and Peng Zhen. [redacted]



China Pictorial ©

Hua's Fate and Ye Jianying: The Old Marshal's Last Stand

The views and actions of senior party Vice Chairman Ye Jianying, de facto head of state as Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee and an "old marshal" held in perhaps the highest esteem by the military, complicated the infighting over Hua's fate and helped drag out the process of demoting him. After participating in the November-December 1980 Politburo meetings that originally decided on Hua's removal, Ye returned to his native southern China, ostensibly to escape the cold northern winter as he has for years. The timing of Ye's departure and his subsequent public behavior, however, suggested that the old man was unhappy about both the treatment of Hua and Deng's progressive de-Maoization. [redacted]

Ye has repeatedly absented himself from Politburo activity to protest and signal his disagreement with party decisions—an action even taken to demonstrate support for Deng Xiaoping in 1976. Given Ye's great prestige and network of supporters particularly in the Army, he is not a man Deng can afford to defy directly. Deng and his allies have, therefore, learned to work around Ye during his absences, albeit at least

seeking his acquiescence in key decisions. In 1980, for example, Ye's unhappiness over the rehabilitation of former President Liu Shaoqi led to a delay of several months in the formal ceremonies, which Ye ultimately did not attend. [redacted]

The removal of Hua from the chairmanship seems to have similarly rankled Ye. Although the party has circulated documents including Ye's lukewarm endorsement of decisions reached at the plenum, the fact that the vice chairman missed public appearances with the entire leadership denied Deng and his allies the claim that the party was united behind their actions. [redacted]

Moreover, it is likely that Hua will benefit from Ye's protection as long as the "old marshal" lives. Ye gave Hua's own personality cult its first boost in 1976, and he supported Hua's contention that Mao had selected him to run the country's affairs. The relationship between Ye and Hua and their clear linkage to the cult of Mao make the two men the most important, though visibly declining, obstacles in the top leadership to Deng and the reformers. [redacted]

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On the rostrum of the Sixth Plenum are all the members of the Politburo standing committee, arranged in no particular order, apparently in another effort to stress the collective nature of the leadership. To prevent confusion, however, former party Chairman Hua Guofeng is in the nominally lowest ranking position at the extreme left. [REDACTED]

The Military Speaks Up

Ever since the All Army Political Work Conference in April 1980, elements within the Army leadership have expressed grave reservations—born of the military's loyalty to Mao and its leftist indoctrination—about the direction in which Deng was leading the party. [REDACTED]

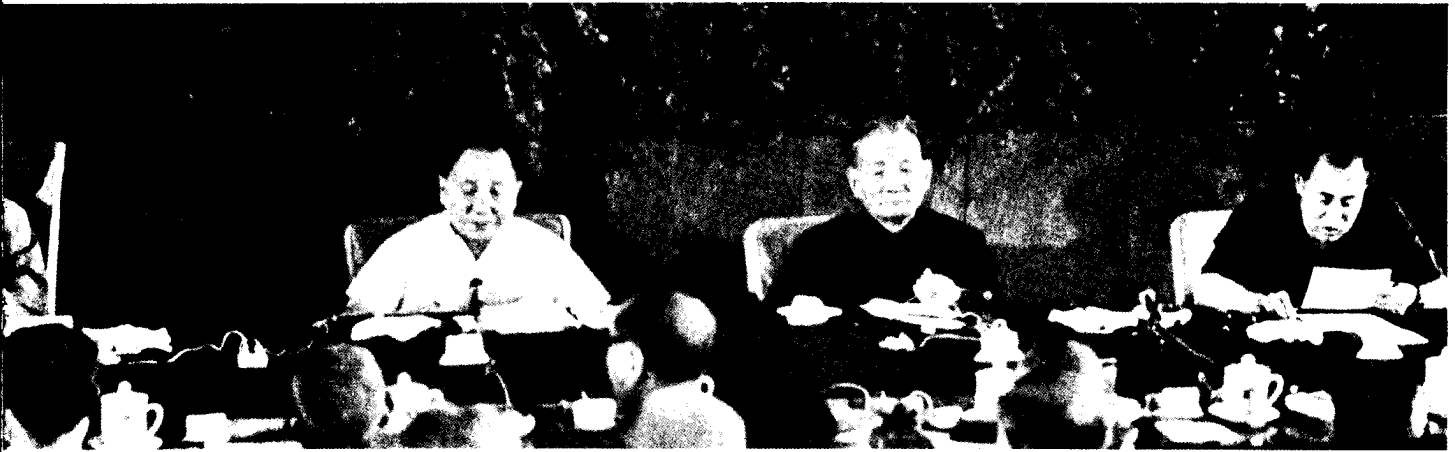
At the conference, both Hua and Army General Political Department Director Wei Guoqing expressed misgivings about the use of material incentives, since soldiers, who do not ordinarily produce saleable goods and services, were unlikely to share in such benefits. Numerous press reports have subsequently described the party's efforts to reassure soldiers that the dismantling of the commune system would not cause disproportionate hardships for military families. The subject remains sensitive, however, and directions have been issued to ensure that local authorities honor welfare provisions for military dependents, who were previously looked after by the communes. Years of political indoctrination centered on Mao have made the military a bastion of Maoism. In addition, many soldiers are concerned that Deng's reduction in force and push for upgrading of skills within the People's Liberation Army will mean demobilization and a return to the hard life of the countryside. [REDACTED]

Since taking over the Military Commission from Hua in January, Deng has tried to tackle the military's complaints while pressing his campaign to modernize and depoliticize the armed forces. Deng's main emphasis has, however, remained on his own policy goals. He succeeded in forcing his choice for Defense Minister, Geng Biao, on reluctant senior officers. The PLA was required to accept a major budget cut in February, only six months after unhappily agreeing to a 13-percent reduction in its budget. He has also overseen a new large troop demobilization and the establishment of new, higher recruitment standards. Pressure, meanwhile, is growing on disgruntled senior officers to retire. [REDACTED]

Deng's tactics in implementing his policies highlight the importance and difficulty of the tasks. As a case in point, he has taken on the job of Military Commission chairman himself despite his oft-stated intention to withdraw from day-to-day affairs and the constitutional provision according the job to the party chairman. There are also signs that Deng is attempting to impose an intermediate level of governmental control between the PLA's top ranks and the party leaders—in effect, a buffer that would depoliticize and stabilize the Army's links to the party. Prior to the Sixth

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Plenum, for example, the National People's Congress Standing Committee issued instructions on military discipline, a function long reserved to the military's political commissars. [REDACTED]

For his part, Deng has enlisted Hu Yaobang in the effort to find some modus vivendi with the military. Because Hu's reformist zeal has made him personally unpopular in Army ranks—a factor that may well have prevented his selection as the Military Commission chairman—he has in recent months made several overtures to the military. [REDACTED]

Deng's push to remove Hua was designed in part to give Hu Yaobang time in the job to build a personal following within the military under Deng's protection. Hu's success with the Army will be a key indicator of his staying power. [REDACTED]

Despite Deng's hard-won victories in dealing with military opponents, his problems are still not over. Army General Political Department Director and Politburo member Wei Guoqing, for example, has assumed a spokesman's role for left-leaning officials who are concerned with the activities of dissident intellectuals. Wei, who apparently supported both Hua and a kinder verdict on Mao, will likely become a rallying point for some of Deng's opponents. Indeed, media articles suggest that some members of the military are unwilling to accept the Resolution's judgment on Hua despite an intense propaganda effort to build support for the document's conclusions. [REDACTED]

The Resolution on Party History

"The Resolution on Certain Historical Questions" stands alongside Hu Yaobang's promotion as one of the major products of the Sixth Plenum. After 15 months of argument and compromise, the plenum endorsed a document that ideologically supports Deng's pragmatic approach through a revamped party line. The Resolution also provides a new political baseline for the reformers' use in making future changes in policy and personnel. [REDACTED]

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Wei Guoqing, Politburo member and director of the Army's General Political Department, at the Sixth Plenum. [redacted]

The Resolution sharply repudiates the legacy of Mao Zedong's later years, the Cultural Revolution, and other aspects of party history that form the basis of leftist critiques of current policies. It does, however, carefully preserve enough of Mao's reputation to prevent a sweeping condemnation that could undermine the regime's legitimacy. The Resolution addresses sensitive—and heretofore avoided—periods in the party's past and makes definitive judgment on them. It also presents a credible but highly critical evaluation of the party's history long sought by moderates within the party and intellectuals outside it. [redacted]

Leftists are the clear losers in the document. The Resolution scores "leftism" as a deviation from Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought and details leftist errors in economics and politics during the Great Leap Forward, the 1960-62 "period of natural disasters," and the Cultural Revolution. The assessment declares that leftism undermined the morale of the party and led to the eclipse of party traditions like democratic centralism. Finally, the Resolution repudiates the leftist line of the Ninth, 10th, and 11th Congresses [redacted]

Mao's own leftist mistakes constitute the heart of the Resolution's critique. The document handles the sensitive issue of Mao's role by weighing his achievements through the mid-1950s against his later failures—a format in accord with Deng Xiaoping's public statements that Mao's contributions are greater than his errors. [redacted]

The Resolution nonetheless is firm in its condemnation of Mao's later years. The document asserts that Mao began to stray from the mainstream of the party and his own principles after the benchmark Eighth Party Congress in 1956, which established policies that closely resemble those of today's leaders. In the process, it criticized Mao for failing to heed the Congress' decision to concentrate on economic development. The document acknowledges, for the first time, that Mao initiated the disastrous Cultural Revolution. In attacking Mao's personal leadership style—something orthodox leaders had lobbied against—the Resolution echoes the sentiments earlier expressed by Deng and asserts that in his later years Mao was unable to correct his errors. [redacted]

The Resolution presents a positive, upbeat view of the party's future, praising Deng Xiaoping by name. It heartily approves of post-Third Plenum policies and argues that the party has put the Cultural Revolution behind it and is a healthy and vital institution capable of modernizing the country. In this respect, the document emphasizes political unity, collective leadership, and limited democracy. [redacted]

Deng's political skill was vital in steering the document through the plenum debate. Argument was apparently prolonged by considerable disagreement over the 1958-65 period, when many who are in power today, including Deng himself, acquiesced in Mao's early leftist policies. Deng engineered a face-saving compromise that shared blame for the errors of that period and thereby overcame obstacles to a final draft. Deng probably had to restrain his own supporters who pushed for removal of all references to Mao or his thought in books and public places, threatening to unhorse the hard-won compromise. [redacted]

Controversy lingers despite the air of finality that surrounds the Resolution. Both the document's ideological findings and its treatment of Mao will remain

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Quotations From the Resolution

On the early Mao: Our party and people would have had to grope in the dark much longer had it not been for Comrade Mao Zedong, who more than once rescued the Chinese Revolution from grave danger. . . .

On the later Mao: While making serious mistakes, he repeatedly urged the whole party to study the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin conscientiously and imagined that his theory and practice were Marxist and that they were essential for the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Herein lies his tragedy.

On the Cultural Revolution: History has shown that the Cultural Revolution, initiated by a leader laboring under a misapprehension and capitalized on by counterrevolutionary cliques, led by domestic turmoil and brought catastrophe to the party, the state, and the whole people.

—Chief responsibility for the grave “left” error of the Cultural Revolution, an error comprehensive in magnitude and protracted in duration, does indeed lie with Comrade Mao Zedong.

Theses of the Cultural Revolution: They were incorporated into a general theory—the “theory of continued revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat”—which then took on a specific meaning. These erroneous “left” theses, upon which Comrade Mao Zedong based himself in initiating the “Cultural Revolution,” were obviously inconsistent with the system of Mao Zedong Thought, which is the integration of the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution. These theses must be thoroughly distinguished from Mao Zedong Thought.

On the removal of Hua as party Chairman: Obviously, under his leadership it is impossible to correct “left” errors within the party, and all the more impossible to restore the party’s fine traditions.

On Deng and the Tiananmen Incident: In April of the same year (1976), a powerful movement of protest signaled by the Tiananmen Incident swept the whole country, a movement to mourn for the late Premier Zhou Enlai and oppose the Gang of Four. In essence, the movement was a demonstration of support for the party’s correct leadership as represented by Deng Xiaoping.

[redacted]

controversial. On the one hand, conservatives and elements in the PLA are unhappy with the negative assessment of much of the party’s recent history. On the other, intellectuals, one of the major audiences for the Resolution, may not accept its distinctions between Mao and the Gang of Four or between Mao and the party. For many, Mao was the party, and the party still remains deeply suspect. [redacted]

Because of its complexity, length, and calculated ambiguity on specific issues, the Resolution remains open to interpretation. Each faction within the party and the Army will twist it to its own ends. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] There are indications already that the military is focusing primarily on the document’s praise of Mao Zedong. The party has urged the people to restrain their impulse to use the document to settle old scores, but such appeals may not be effective. [redacted]

Foreign Policy Implications:
China Stiffens Its Posture

Both the Resolution and Hu Yaobang’s speech on 1 July commemorating the party’s 60th anniversary contain a conventional reiteration of Beijing’s anti-Soviet foreign policy. They also display a new, more assertively nationalistic line, particularly a sensitivity to the Taiwan issue, with obvious implications for the United States [redacted]

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The Resolution declared that "we must maintain our own national dignity and confidence and there must be no slavishness or submissiveness in any form in dealing with big, powerful, or rich countries." In Hu's speech, similar language was juxtaposed to a call for "reunification" with Taiwan. Since the plenum, Beijing has published a series of critical articles dealing with the Taiwan Relations Act. These reject what the Chinese see as attempts by some in the United States to use the Act to introduce "officiality" into relations with Taiwan. Moreover, new and prominent articles have extolled various historical figures for their "principled" stand in dealing with foreign countries. [REDACTED]

Prospects

Since the 11th Party Congress in 1977, Deng Xiaoping has steadily consolidated his position despite a Politburo and Central Committee that were initially stacked against him. Deng's need to court those bodies frequently has forced modifications in his policies and slowed his effort to place his followers in secure positions to succeed him; it has not, however, stalled his political momentum. By tailoring policies to accommodate the sensitivities about signs of social disorder and acting to remedy shortcomings in economic policy, Deng has kept the political initiative in his hands. [REDACTED]

Like Deng's tactics after the Third Plenum, the months remaining before the 12th Party Congress—tentatively scheduled for early next year—are likely to bring a revived political offensive by the reformers. They will probably resume pressure against remaining opposition in the Politburo, push for reforms, and prepare a campaign to neutralize left-leaning cadres who resist current policies. In doing so, however, the reformers are likely to continue the more cautious approach that has been evident in their attempt to rebuild the leadership consensus since the reverses of last winter. The need to settle Hu Yaobang in his job and bolster the gains already made may slow efforts to weed out the party ranks as well as retard changes in government, party, and economic institutions. [REDACTED]

Still, the reformers appear to have an agenda—largely hidden—for eventual changes that they believe are required to prevent a return to political and economic disruption. [REDACTED]

Party Rectification. Remolding the party membership to reflect the regime's new pragmatic policies is high on the reformers' agenda. Rectification has so far been discussed in moderate terms, emphasizing to wayward cadre that their acceptance of and support for the new policies will protect them from a purge. In this regard, Hua Guofeng's retention in the leadership is designed to encourage cooperation. Hu Yaobang's party anniversary speech and a *People's Daily* article by the director of the party's organization department, however, hint that the reformers will keep the pressure on by steadily adding new members, loyal to them, as a first step in reshaping the party. [REDACTED]

The Economy. As in the last six months, troubles over economic policy will continue to cloud the political future. The leadership needs concrete economic plans that will mesh with the plenum's endorsement of the break with past economic policy and buoy its sagging image among the Chinese people. Debate nevertheless persists over the relative weight to assign to readjustment and reform; powerful figures who favor central planning and heavy industry remain in key positions where they have repeatedly obstructed the reformers' attempts to redirect the economy. Given the politically costly false starts and mixed signals that have plagued the economy so far, Deng's coalition will try to use its success at the plenum to forge a working consensus on economic policy. [REDACTED]

"Institutional Reform." Deng and his allies see the party's efforts to reform itself and the government as the keys to long-term stability. The reformers' public line repeatedly emphasizes that China's institutions must change to prevent backsliding toward the patterns of personal rule, which led to Mao's errors. Premier Zhao Ziyang is likely to take the lead in this area. By promoting him ahead of more senior leaders, the plenum removed the cloud that had hung over Zhao and his reform program since last winter, when readjustment was stressed over reform. [REDACTED]

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The Politburo, the State Chairman, and the General Secretary.

Deng and the reformers want to continue reshaping the Politburo and Secretariat with more youthful and knowledgeable leaders like Hu and Zhao. To that end, the reformers have so far unsuccessfully attempted to form a senior Advisory Council of the Politburo, where superannuated members could be retired. While the reformers' have nudged several elderly members, who in principle have surrendered some of their government jobs, into accepting advisory status, the effort has foundered on Ye Jianying's unwillingness to yield his position. Ye realizes that he is frequently the only serious obstacle to many of Deng's ambitions, including the demotion of Hua. At 83 years and in failing health, Ye is probably viewed by Deng and others as a problem that time, rather than action, will solve. [REDACTED]

The reformers' intention to recreate an official head-of-state position is less clear. The issue prompts concern among those who stand to lose in any redistribution of power within the leadership. Articles in legal journals have argued the pros and cons in recent months; Soong Ching-ling was made honorary head of state on her deathbed in May. Here again Ye Jianying's refusal to step into retirement appears to be the principal impediment, since he still is de facto head of state. [REDACTED]

Finally, the Sixth Plenum's failure to appoint a party general secretary to succeed Hu Yaobang leaves another ambiguity. Hu has not been publicly identified as general secretary, although he reportedly retains the title since his promotion to chairman. Immediately before the Sixth Plenum, Xi Zhongxun appeared to be the candidate of Deng and Hu for the general secretary position. According to the Hong Kong leftist press, however, other leaders objected because Xi lacked experience on the Secretariat. He may well be nominated for the post again at a later plenum. Meanwhile, he is in charge of legal affairs and is maintaining a high level of appearances, consistent with candidacy for the higher post. [REDACTED]

As a new and untested chairman, Hu is confronted with a more complex task than before, a fact that is likely to make him move more cautiously. He must extract results from a recalcitrant economy that will justify his pragmatic approach to the younger generations of Chinese steeped in Maoism. He needs to continue the reforms he has started but not at the expense of alarming his critics into a unified opposition. Changing roles, moreover, has made him more a spokesman for the regime than its critic. Recognizing the widespread skepticism about his promotion, Hu now stresses reliance on the guidance of the older generation of leaders, especially Deng. [REDACTED]

Despite these inhibitions, however, Hu realizes that he must use the next few years under Deng's protection to build the political influence that will prevent him from becoming, like Hua, another transitional figure in the next Chinese succession struggle. Although the party repeatedly appeals for new democratic methods, the time-tested method for dealing with the opposition is a ruthless and persistent purge. [REDACTED]

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